

1 Cor 13 (Version 1)

by Leonard Ravenhill

Leonard Ravenhill explores the profound nature of love as described in 1 Corinthians 13, emphasizing its importance over spiritual gifts.

Duration: 46:12

Scripture: Matthew 5:1, 2 Peter 1:9

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal anecdote about his experience with his children and a tennis game. He then transitions to discussing the concept of love, specifically the biblical definition of love. He emphasizes that love is not just a feeling or emotion, but a selfless act of kindness and sacrifice. The speaker also highlights the importance of loving God and loving others with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. He concludes by emphasizing the need to prioritize God above all else and to live a life of love and service to others.

Transcript

I want to thank you for the privilege of sharing your fellowship this week along with my wife. We've certainly enjoyed the time we've spent here. The pastor has been very gracious in everything.

Very often when we go to a church, after we've been there a day or two, the pastor begins to unload all his problems on us. Well, this pastor must not have one, because he hasn't said a single thing. Usually they talk about some caramel beacon that upset the apple cart, or some cancer in the church.

He hasn't said a thing about that. And if he's going to invite me to be his assistant, he hasn't said a thing about that. So, uh, it's been very good, and I appreciate it very deeply.

We don't have another meeting this year that I know of, booked, so if you'll pray for us. I do want to do some writing, if possible. Did you notice this 13th chapter, 1 Corinthians, has 13 verses? Now, if I spend as much time over each verse as I've done previously preaching, you should be home for lunch tomorrow, or at least for supper.

My reaction to this chapter, every time I read it, is this. It is surely the most beautiful poem on love that has ever been written. And when I read it, it's so smooth, it has no bumps in it, it has no threatenings in it.

And I can't help but think, as I read it, that this is the man who went down the Damascus road, breathing out threatenings against the church, carrying in what was called a toga, his garment, that what he thought was the death sentence of the church. He was going to get it destroyed. And now we discover that this man is just as radical in love as he was in hatred.

In the second epistle, he gives us a secret there of his own life. I like to know what motivates men. And I don't find anywhere in all his writings that the Apostle Paul gives us a summary of his theology, except in the second epistle in the fifth chapter, where he talks about knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

And he talks about the judgment seat of Christ. And then he gives a secret, I think, of his life. He says, because the love of Christ constraineth me.

And this was his motivation. This man was so hot that even other Christians couldn't handle him. Because he says that there was a period when his choice friends, the men that were on his gospel team, forsook him.

He says, all men forsook me, nevertheless the Lord stood by me. And I say again, I'm amazed at the, not just the vastness of his theology, I think he had the colossal intellect that God used. But I think of the circumference of all his travels.

You remember, perhaps, that he was born in the ancient capital of the world, which was Tarsus, and he finished in the military capital of the world, which was Rome. In between, he went to the religious capital of the world, which was Jerusalem. And he went to the intellectual capital of the world, which was Athens.

And he went to the immoral capital of the world, which was Corinth. This man is tireless. I believe the secret of his life, as I, as best I analyze it, is this.

That one day, he decided that Jesus Christ was worth everything he had, every beat of his heart. He never had any second interest. I believe the secret was this.

He said, this one thing I do. And there is no evidence anywhere that this amazing man backslid or cooled off in any way. He spent as much time, or more time, in prisons than in palaces.

There is no form of persecution that he didn't endure, either physical or mental or spiritual. And yet, he survives all of this. He triumphs in it.

Because, again, he is motivated by the greatest of all motivations, the love of God, which he speaks of in Romans 7, is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. Now, this epistle, obviously, is written, this first epistle to the letter. I didn't guess at that.

He says that in the seventh chapter. Now, concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me, and then he goes on, and the chapter is a reply to many problems that they had in the church. Now, if you're going to summarize the chapter, you'd have to say the first part of this chapter, verses 1 to 11, is corrective, and then from verse 12 on to the end is constructive.

At least, the chapters in the Bible. The first, 1 to 11, are corrective, and then chapters 12 to the end are constructive. Now, here he is beginning a theological discussion in the twelfth chapter, which he resumes in the fourteenth chapter, and it's caused an amazing amount of controversy, for sure.

I know people who use this thirteenth chapter as a kind of bowl in a bowling alley, to skittle everything he said in the previous chapter, and what he's going to say in the next chapter. They say something like this, you see, tongues and miracles and gifts are very beautiful, but after all, they're not much compared with love, because Paul says, seek something better. And so, they try to dismiss the gifts of the Spirit at the expense of love.

Now, the symbol of the Holy Spirit coming upon the Lord Jesus was a dove, you'll remember, and the dove has got nine feathers on each wing, nine main feathers on each wing. Now, there are nine fruits of the Spirit, and there are nine gifts of the Spirit, and just as a bird can't get off the ground with one wing, he'd just go around in circles. He needs both wings to get off the ground and get someplace.

By the same token, surely, the church of Jesus Christ needs all these gifts to balance her. You remember the rod of Aaron that buried it? It had three branches on either side, and on each of those three branches, there were three almonds that were carved. So, you've got nine on this side again, and nine on this side.

So again, there is balance here, as there is in all scriptural truth. Now, Paul is not dismissing gifts of the Spirit at the expense of love, not by a long way at all. And so again, this is his motivation.

He says, well, I speak with the tongues of men and of angels. Now, that was a very dangerous thing to say to the Corinthians. It was very much like going to West Point and giving Electrum pacifism, or he'd be as welcome as the skunk at a wedding.

You don't talk to Greeks like that, he's writing to Greeks. They excelled in the tongue, they excelled in oratory. They didn't have choirs, but they did have competition in oratory.

And you may remember that they had famous people like Demosthenes, maybe the greatest orator that ever lived. He was born with an impediment. And in order to get over that impediment, to be acceptable socially, and to be one of the most distinguished and eventually the greatest orator perhaps of all time, he went down to the beach and he put pebbles in his mouth, and he learned to get his tongue round those pebbles and his voice over the pebbles, and he mastered that tremendous impediment.

Winston Churchill had an awful impediment, but he inspired me many times during the war, Second World War, with his speeches. And so this man is determined, and he became eventually successful. The Roman orators were very brilliant men.

They attacked the emotions. The Greek orator attacked the intellect. The true preacher is not a descendant of the Greek orator, nor is he descendant of the Roman orator.

The true preacher is the descendant of the Hebrew prophet. He is not there to tickle emotions, he's not there merely to stir the mind. He gets deeper down the night, and he gets to the conscience.

Now this man is, I say he is, certainly Paul was not a great orator. We talk of him as though somehow he would dazzle you with his brilliance. No, the orator of the early church was Apollos.

Apollos was a very brilliant orator. Paul was not. How do you know? Well, when he went to the intellectual capital of the Greeks there, he challenged the Epicureans and the Stoics and the poets and the philosophers, and they did not dazzle him, he dazzled them.

They were amazed. This little hunchback Jew, the tradition says, he was rather deformed, he was very small. Well, heavens, you don't get all the beatings he got.

He got stoned what time? Five times he was whipped. Forty times saved one. Three times he suffered shipwreck.

Three times he was stoned. You don't enter a beauty competition when you're beaten up like that. He was in bad shape.

And so when he went up there, they looked at him and they said his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible. He was no match for them in oratory. Now, when he's writing there to the, that's, pardon me, he says that in the second letter, the tenth chapter in verse ten, that the big athletes in school, in the universities, look down on his little figure.

They said his bodily presence is weak, his speech is contemptible. When he went to the intellectuals, they said, what will this babbler say? It was more than a word of derision. He didn't have smooth, polished periods.

But what good is that if you don't have anointing? Somebody went to hear a famous English preacher and when they came back, they said, what do you think of him? He said, well, he was faultily faultless, icily regular, and splendidly null. Isn't that beautiful? Or is your supper still taking effect? You just can't think as quickly right here. But that's a terrible thing to say about a preacher.

He was faultily faultless, and icily regular, and splendidly null. Now, Paul here says, I may speak with the tongues of men. He doesn't say he does, he says, what if I did? Now, again, he has been arguing here in this, in this twelfth chapter about the gifts of the Spirit.

Oh, what controversy they cause. The least gift causes the most trouble. The least gift is tongues.

It causes more heartache and havoc than any other gift in all the whole list. Now, people say you must speak in tongues throughout the baptism of the Spirit. You can't prove that scripturally.

I don't care who you are. At least you won't convince me, because I've already convinced myself. But you won't convince me of that.

Why not? Because the scripture clearly says, he gave to one, what? He gave to one the spirit of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another gifts of healing, to another the workings of miracles, to another the discerning of spirits, to another diverse gifts of tongues, to another. Now, the Holy Spirit isn't foolish, surely he wouldn't say that. If everybody had to have the gift of tongues, the Holy Spirit would certainly say he gave to everybody the gift of tongues.

He does not say that. He says he gave to another. Now, at the end of the chapter, when he summarizes it, he says, well, do all speak in tongues? Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? The answer is negative every time.

They do not. Now, having said that, that does not dismiss a valid experience of tongues. There is a valid experience.

There is a valid experience of interpretation. I believe they're very rare. I'm not going to stay here.

Somebody once said, you know, you've got to watch what you do preaching. You can stir up more rattlesnakes than you can kill. Well, I don't want to do that.

I'll leave it to the doctor here to answer all the questions. I will stir the rattlesnakes and leave him to kill them. That, uh, you see, there are at least three kinds of tongues.

There are psychic tongues. I used to go to a home where there were two lovely daughters. Well, the mother thought so, I didn't for sure.

But, uh, she said she had two lovely daughters. And, uh, you know those girls communicated from being about 10 years of age, they had a language that could not be in any way defined. If they wanted a thing, they'd say something, yak, yak, badooba, badooba, like that.

And the girl would say, yeah, yeah, all right. And she'd go upstairs and bring a certain book. The other girl would say something to her, and she'd go get something else.

And their mother said, I have never understood this. They did not learn it, but they can communicate it. We can't define it, but they speak another language.

I've heard Mishris say that men that were drunk, dancing round a native fire, have spoken flawless English, almost Oxford English. So, there is a psychic tongue. There is a demonic tongue.

Spiritists can speak in tongues. Now, people say today, do you know the greatest need there is in the church? Well, I'll tell you what I think is the greatest need. It is not the gift of discernment, because I have a sister-in-law who discerns many things, and she's quite unsaved.

People say, I've got the gift of discernment, so does an ungodly man. What you need, what we need is the gift of discerning of spirits, to see whether they're true spirits or false spirits. Because Satan is a great mimic, he's a great imitator.

So, you don't look too happy, I'd better hurry on here. He's not speaking with the tongues of men or of angels. He said, supposing I did, and yet I have no knowledge, and yet he says, I have no love.

Supposing I have no charity. Well, I like the translation that you put in there, because after all, this is an archaic English word. What do you mean by charity? By charity you mean you give away your surplus clothes, or your old clothes and your surplus cash.

I had a lady came into church one day, she was a meanest looking, she was a saintly woman, but shriveled and poor and pale and pathetic. Her husband was a brute, he beat her, he used her like a football. I went to their house, I would have given her fifty cents for everything in it.

If she took her shoes off and didn't hide them, he pawned them. I said, do you have a clock? No, we've had lots, he pawns the clocks. I got nothing.

She came to church in very poor clothes. One day she came in a beautiful ensemble. Oh, she looked gorgeous.

Lovely coat and beautiful dress. She stopped in the foyer of the church and she said to me as she went out, I want to talk to you for a minute. I said, fine.

And she opened the coat and she said, do you like my dress? I said, yes. She said, you know, nobody ever wore it before. I said, well, that's nice.

And this coat is brand new. And my hat. And look, my shoes.

And my handbag. And I said, well, what happened? Did you get some money left? Oh, you know Mrs. So-and-so who comes to church? Yes. Well, you know, she's a beautiful Christian.

And for many years she's given me her cast-off clothes. She'll give me a spring outfit when she's finished with it. She gives me last year's winter's clothes and so forth.

And do you know, she came to my house the other day and said, look, dear, I want to take you to a town and buy you a new outfit. And she said, oh, that would be wonderful. I haven't had a new outfit since I was married.

But really, you're not just kind of, you know, being charitable, are you? You know, she had a little bit of pride. You're not going to do it just because you feel you must. And she said, no.

She said, I was praying the other morning and I actually was singing to the Lord, my Jesus, I love thee. And he said, stop. Does he ever say stop to you or can't he get a word in edgeways? Does he ever say stop to you when you're praying? And she said, I stopped.

And he said, look, you cannot love vertically without loving horizontally. You cannot love God or you cannot see without loving your brother who you can see. Now you say that you love me.

You said yesterday you were going to buy that beautiful coat and that hat and those matching shoes and that dress and that handbag for, I don't know, say \$600 and give your old ones to Mrs. Saw and Saw again. That is charity. You buy the new ones and you wear the old ones and that's love.

Now I went into a shop one day. It wasn't this suit. I got this one.

No, I bought this in a sale. But I went in a shop and a man said to me, there's a suit. That would do for a preacher.

I don't know why, but it was cheap. And so he said, there's a suit. Try it on.

And I tried it on. And he said, you look good in that suit. I said, I look good in any suit.

But anyhow, he said, well, I'm going to give it to you. And let me check it. Oh, you need this pants shortening a bit.

Now you come on Friday. And I went in. He said, well, there you are.

I'm giving you the suit. I said, no, you're not. He said, are you going to buy it? I said, no, the price tag is too high.

So you're not going to take it? I said, I sure am. He said, how are you going to take it? I said, like this. And I put it on my back and I started walking out.

Well, you said you wouldn't let me give it to you. No, you haven't given it to me. Well, you haven't bought it? No, I haven't bought it.

Well, how do you work it out? I said, immediately I lifted that suit up. There was a record made up there that on a certain day in a certain place, this brother gave a suit to Jesus Christ. How do you figure that out? Because inasmuch as you do it to the least of my brethren, you do it unto me.

What size suit do you take, pastor? A 38. Remember, please. Because inasmuch as you do it to the pastor, you do it to him, you see.

Charity is condescending. Oh, but love is not like that at all. The thing that let this man bear his back to the smiters, hang on a piece of wood in the Mediterranean for 36 hours, in weariness, in fastings, in painfulness, in tribulation, in distress, in famine, in peril, in nakedness, in sword, in perils of the deep, in perils of mine own countrymen.

Go on. And he exhausts everything the devil can shoot at him. And he comes up smiling at the end of it.

He says, do you know what? They're never going to treat me better than they treated him. And if they treated the Son of God like that, I expect to have this. But I want to tell you something.

I've got something inside of me, and I won't break up under it. Because the love of God, again, is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost. You see, we have kind of, well, we live in a strange day.

A day when people don't know the difference between love and lust. Between laughter and leering. We think of love as being a kind of a hothouse plant.

It's the very opposite of that. You read that beautiful, beautiful story back in the Old Testament there. And when you get to the end of the Song of Solomon, do you know what it says? It says love is stronger than death.

It says that waters, many waters cannot quench love. And the hymn writer in the Salvation Army paraphrased that like this. He says, waters cannot quench it, floods can never drown.

Substance cannot buy it, love's a priceless crown. Oh, the wondrous story, mystery divine. I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine.

Is there on earth a closer bond than this? That I'm my beloved's, that my beloved's mine and I am his? Fawkes Jackson, Dr. Fawkes Jackson of the Methodists, wrote quite a number of years ago, I want, dear Lord, a love that feels for all. A deep, strong love that answers every call. A love divine, a love like thine.

A love for high and low. On me, dear Lord, a love like this bestowed. As I mentioned last night, Dr. Tozer said he could lie on his belly, on the floor, for four or five hours without ever saying a word of prayer or a word of praise because he loved God so much.

He would say in the language of Faber again, Oh, Jesus, Jesus, dearest Lord, forgive me if I say for very love thy sacred name a thousand times a day. Then he quoted a verse that he liked from Faber. I love thee, Lord.

I know not how my rapture's to control. Thy love is like a burning fire that burns within my soul. Burn, burn within me, love of God.

Burn fiercely, night and day, till all the dross of earthly love is burned and burned away. One of the salvationists wrote another parody on that. Or let me quote here from Charles Wesley.

When he said, O thou who camest from above, the pure celestial fire to impart, kindle a flame of sacred love on the mean altar of my heart. There let it for thy glory burn within extinguishable blaze and trembling to its source return in constant prayer and fervent praise. And there's a little boy I learned to him that Wade Jackson wrote.

Loved with everlasting love. Led by grace that love to know. Spirit breathing from above thou hast taught me it is so.

All this full, this perfect peace. All this transport all divine in a love which cannot cease. You can take everything away from a man.

You can take his freedom away from him. You can take his pastor. You can take his church.

You can take the word of God. But you cannot separate him. Paul says, look, he pulls his shoulders back with a holy swagger.

He says at the end of Romans 8, what shall separate us from the love of Christ? Almost spitting with contempt he says, what shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or famine or peril or nakedness or sword. Things present, things to come, height or depth or any other creature. There is nothing.

Now he doesn't include sin in that chapter. Sin will separate us because it greets the spirit of God. And then we come back in penitence and humility.

But he says, burn, burn within me love of God. Salvationist wrote, let me love thee. Love is mighty.

Swaying realms of deed and thought. Thine I can walk uprightly. I can serve thee as I ought.

Listen, love will soften every trial. Love will lighten every care. Love and questioning will follow.

Love will triumph. Love will dare. Let me love thee, Savior.

A baptism of love would put the church of Jesus Christ back into business. If the real love of God was shed in our hearts, we'd shake, shed abroad in our hearts, we'd shake the world for God in a year. That it would have to be God's love, not a synthetic, theological, homogenized love.

Because you see, one of the factors of love, if love is a coin, the other side of the coin is jealousy. Because the word of God says again that while God is a God of love, I the Lord thy God am a jealous God. And the apostle was jealous because he hated everything that had to do with anything that would seek to destroy the church of the living God.

I have a profound admiration for John Wesley. As I said this morning, he was converted when he was thirty-five. And if you turn thirty-five round, it makes fifty-three.

And if you add them together, it makes eighty-eight. So he was converted at thirty-five, about a quarter to nine on the twenty-fourth of May, seventeen hundred and thirty-eight. He died at eighty-eight years of age in full health and strength.

The revolution of his life did not take place in the college, in the university. Sonny at the back, would you quit waving your hand? Are you waving to me or the angels who you're talking to there? Please be quiet.

John Wesley's life was revolutionized by a piece of poetry.

A hundred years before he lived, there was a beautiful little French, petite French lady called Madame Bourignaux. And she wrote a hymn, All thou who camest, No, she didn't write that. What did she write? Come Saviour Jesus from above.

Assist me with thy heavenly grace. Empty my heart of earthly love and for thyself prepare a place. You see, I don't see anything dramatic about that.

Listen to the next stanza. Nothing on earth do I desire but thy pure love within my breast. This, only this, will I require and freely give up all the rest.

Well from a pleasure. And what else this short enduring world can give. Tempt as ye will my soul rebels.

For Christ alone resolved to live. Thee will I love and be alone with pure delight and inward bliss. To know thou takes me for thine own.

Oh, what a happiness is this. Let's go back to that second stanza. Nothing on earth do I desire.

Can you tell God that? Can you really? Can you quote what Charles Wesley says in his hymn, Jesus, you lover of my soul. Thou, oh Christ, art all I want. Business, success and all the other things.

Perish the thought. I want to be a God filled man. I want that love that can consume the apostle and let him get whipped to death maybe half a dozen times.

That love that can carry any burden. That love that can sneer at the devil. I want it.

John Wesley chewed that verse over. Nothing on earth do I desire but thy pure love within my breast. This, only this, will I require and freely give up all the rest.

Well from a pleasure. And he was a wealthy man. He was from a family which was next to the royal family in England.

But there came a moment when he surrendered completely. Not his sins but his self. You see, many of us, God has got your sins but he hasn't got you.

He hasn't got your will. He hasn't got your desires. Nothing on earth do I desire but thy pure love within my breast.

This, only this, will I require and freely give up all the rest. Well from a pleasure and what else. And John Wesley lived for 53 years after that.

He made a fortune. He spent every penny on orphanages for children. Printing Bibles.

Printing hymn books. He crossed the Atlantic three times as a missionary. He wasn't even saved.

He lay down in Georgia one night. He had long hair. And when he woke up in the morning his body was frozen to the ground.

And he said, I managed to get one arm out. And when I got it out I pulled the other out. And then he said, I got my hair and pulled it out of the mud.

And then he said, I worked on one leg and then the other. And I stood up with the clay frozen to my clothes. And then I brushed off the hoarfrost like snow.

And I raised up my hands and sang the doxology. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. And he didn't go to Florida for six months rest after that or write a book out of it.

He took it all in his stride. The love of God was greater than half dying there. Because he wanted to be a missionary and he wasn't saved yet.

There was a constraining love in him. He pitied the ignorant, unenlightened, uneducated, unhelped, unwanted, unsought, unloved people. And so from 35 to 53 years he spent his life in tireless energy for men and women.

And when he died, do you know what he died, do you know what he left when he died? He could have died. Listen, if he had given his genius to business he would have died a multimillionaire. If he had given his genius to inventions, because he used to invent anything for the sake of a hobby, he might have out-Edisoned Edison.

If he had stayed in the Church of England he would have been the most brilliant Archbishop of Canterbury, England ever had. But you see he laid in dust life's glory dead. Like George Matheson when he lost his eyesight and his girlfriend threw him over.

She didn't want him married and handicapped to a blind preacher. And he wrote that beautiful hymn, Out of Pain, where most great hymns come from. He wrote the lovely hymn, O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee.

I give thee back the life I owe, that in thine ocean depths its foam may richer, fuller be. O joy that seekest me through pain, I dare not ask to fly from thee. I trace the rainbow through the rain and feel thy promise is not vain, that morn shall tearless be.

And then he goes on and he finishes it by saying, I lay in dust life's glory dead. I like that. If I could leap I'd leap six feet in the air but I can't do it.

It thrills me to think there's a man this far to eternity so consumed that in the darkest hour of his life when the girl he loved is going to leave him and he's going to be crippled as it were and handicapped. He says, I lay in dust life's glory dead and from the ground there blossoms red life that shall endless be. No, this man doesn't pursue the career of a diplomat.

He doesn't say, I'm staying in the cosy church of England to become its most distinguished prime minister. He doesn't say, I'm its most distinguished bishop. He doesn't say, I'm going to politics and become the most distinguished prime minister in England.

He doesn't say, I'm going to be a merchant and make money. It's all right, I'm not crying money. I'm saying this, there's something greater and money's all right if it doesn't master you.

If you can master it, great, if it masters you, you're in trouble. So John Wesley died. He left in his will that they should take his body to the grave of course but it should be carried there by six paupers.

And he said, give each of them one pound note and that's all he left in cash. He left a pound note for each man that was carrying him to his grave. He left six pound notes.

He left six silver spoons. As a matter of fact, the IRS in that day was after him because he had six silver spoons. Where did you get them? You see, you thought IRS was a modern disease.

Well it's not. It's 200 odd years old anyhow because they were after Wesley in his day. What are you doing with six silver spoons? So he had six pound notes, six silver spoons, a handful of books, a faded Geneva gown that he preached in and there was something else he left.

What was it? Oh, I know, the Methodist church. I knew there was something. It wasn't served up to him on a platter.

Do you know the last 600 sermons that Mr. Wesley preached, he preached in the streets. He only got into church six times to preach out of 600 sermons. A friend of mine has a beautiful lithograph, an old, old picture I would like very much and it shows a man with a butcher's cleaver standing before Wesley going to split his head.

It shows a man with a pitchfork behind him. It shows a man in a tree with a trumpet blasting. They didn't want to hear him.

He had to stand on his father's tomb to preach. Do you know the worst thing that happens to the church of God is when it becomes rich. I said to you the other day that I like that definition by Dr. J.B. Phillips, because it's English anyhow, that J.B. Phillips has a summary of the Acts of the Apostles which is superb.

He sees the whole of the Acts of the Apostles throbbing with life. Why? Because the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts. And J.B. Phillips sums up the early church in the Acts of the Apostles like this.

He says, this is the church of Jesus Christ before it became fat and short of breath by prosperity. This is the church of Jesus Christ before it became muscled down by over-organization. This is the church of Jesus Christ where they didn't gather together a bunch of intellectuals to study psychosomatic medicine.

They healed the sick. This is the church of Jesus Christ where they did not say prayers, but they prayed in the Holy Ghost. No wonder they were an embarrassment to government.

No wonder they turned the world upside down. They didn't live in the lush, smooth, comfortable atmosphere we're in. You've been a wonderful audience and I thank you for coming night after night to hear my gentle words.

And I'm glad you came. But I was in a meeting not too long ago where a preacher told me, he said, the other week we had a veteran missionary here. Man, the old guy was pleaded like this, an old Pentecostal preacher that had weathered many a storm in Africa.

And he said he'd just been in a church, he told me. It was a cold, wintry night. We had a pretty cold winter last winter, at least most places had.

And the pastor stood up and said, my dear friends, this Wednesday night I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for coming to church. It is a terrible night. The wind is blowing and it's most uncomfortable.

And you've come to church. Oh, you're so wonderful. He was prepared to rapture them and give them all a crown right on the spot.

They were so marvelous that they'd come to church. And he said, I want to thank you from the depths of my heart. Oh, he laid it on.

And the old boy there was like this all the time. And when he got up he said, I'm glad to be here tonight. And I would like to add my personal gratitude that you people left your central heated homes and got in your beautiful heated cars and came to this heated church to sit on these nice soft pews.

Whereas where I am in Africa, a man will walk 15 miles to church and often have to stop to get thorns out of his feet. And often hazard his life because there are lions there. And often has danger crossing a river because of hypotomuses.

Hypotomite. Oh, go anyhow. You know what they are? Those ugly things.

And then on top of that, crocodiles. And he said, you know what? They walk 15 miles home at night and they haven't got a bite of food when they get there. And you lush people left your warm homes for your warm cars for a warm church and beautiful seats.

He said, I'm going to preach, but I'll have to go and throw up first. You make me sick. Well, maybe that's a bit of a... No, it's not exaggeration.

That actually happens. But you see, the softer you get, the softer you get. Ah, aren't we wonderful.

I sometimes wonder what will happen when persecution really does come. How many of us will stand the test? Have we got what it takes? You can't love theology. You can't love a creed.

You can only love a living person who is Jesus Christ. And Wesley fell in love. Everything was consumed in him.

Nothing on earth do I desire. And nothing ever charmed him after that. All the seductions of the world were lost on him.

No, sir, he didn't leave too much. Except, of course, a lot of blessed memories for all of us. Again, I say, love is not a hothouse plant.

Waters cannot quench it. Floods can never drown. Substance cannot buy it.

Love's a priceless crown. You see, this was the emphasis of Jesus. I can imagine a man coming to him one day and saying, uh, I think you're quite a preacher.

I really do. I sat on the edge of the crowd and heard the most amazing thing that will ever be said. I think they call it the Sermon on the Mount.

It was fabulous. And, uh, I think he did a good job. But, you know, I got a problem.

I got a brother, and he, he, he, well, he's a thorn in my flesh. I just can't manage him. He gets me angry, and I bailed him out of trouble twice.

And he's come back a third time. Do I have to bail him out a third time? And Jesus says, no. He said, well, thank you, sir.

What do I do? He says, bail him out 70 times 7. Oh. So he went home, and he bought a sheet of plywood, 8 feet by 4, and he made 490 squares on it. And he nailed it up in the kitchen, and every time his brother did something wrong, he ticked it off, he ticked it off.

And one day, about three years after, his brother did something bad, and he went to him, he said, listen, I want to tell you something. I've been putting up with this for nearly three years. And that preacher fellow said, I have to forgive you 490 times, and you've got to 485, and I'm going to tell you something.

When we get to 490, you've got it all coming. Well, that's a legalistic way of looking at it, isn't it? I mean, I've only to forgive him 490 times, and he's nearly got there. No, no, no.

Jesus says love doesn't count at all. It doesn't count at all. I may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but if I have no love, it doesn't say if I have no love tongues are nothing or gifts are nothing.

It says if I have no love, I'm a moral nobody. You can raise the dead. One of the most amazing things Jesus ever said, as far as I'm concerned, was this, that some of you will come up to the judgment seat and say, hi, I'm the great preacher.

I cast out devils. I did this. He said, I never knew you.

Oh, we're not going to be judged for the size of our works. We're going to be judged for the quality, not the quantity. And the apostle Paul, at least here again, is trying to get through to these people.

Remind them of the greatness of this fact, that they can be filled with the love of God. It can be shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost. Now, he says, oh, I speak in the tongues of men.

The preacher robbed me of a point there, but I still love him. In the sleepy Elizabethan English version here, it says, charity suffereth long. Now, I told you the difference between charity and love.

The woman gives away her old clothes in charity. She wears the old ones and buys the other lady new ones. That's love that does that.

And then, so you read this wonderful, wonderful chapter. Love suffereth long in his kind. Love envieth not.

Love vaunteth not itself. Love is never rude, Moffat's translation. Love is never rude.

Love is never irritated. Love is never glad when others go wrong. Love is always slow to expose.

Love is always eager to believe the best. It beareth all things. It believeth all things.

It hopeth all things. It endureth all things. Now, that's a strange word.

Love, isn't it? The trouble is, in English, we've only one word for love. People say, I love my dog. I love my cat.

I love my husband. Same love that they had for the cat. Love my husband.

Love the cat. Love football. Love this.

Love that. You've only got one word. The Greeks had at least four.

But he isn't talking of something in classical Greek here. He's talking about a different love that comes from heaven. It's exactly the same word which is used in John 3, 16.

For God so loved the world. It's a sacrificial love. It's a love that beareth all things.

Do I have to bear with my brother 490 times? No, you have to bear with him 490 times more after that, and after that, and after that, and after that. This love beareth all things. And it believeth all things.

And it hopeth all things. And it endureth all things. In fact, he goes to the maximum, and he says, you know what? This love never faileth.

Now, you could think of this chapter, if you like, 1 Corinthians 13. I think of it this way. It's like a ring, a gold ring.

And there are three precious jewels on it. And the three precious jewels are faith, and hope, and love. These three.

Two of them you won't take in. Well, two of them, yes, they're all abiding. They all abide.

The others don't abide. There'll be no tongues in heaven. There'll be no miracles in heaven.

You won't need faith in heaven. But he says, those things are going to pass. Read the chapter.

He talks about things which are passing, and things which are permanent. Miracles. There's nobody to heal in heaven.

Preaching. What a relief. There'll be no preaching in heaven.

Offerings. There'll be no offerings in heaven. There are a lot of things heaven won't have.

I'm going to leave them behind. But there are three things I take out of time into eternity. Now abide of faith, and hope, and love.

The three jewels on the ring. But the greatest of the three is the central one, which is love. After all, who is the first being in the world? God.

And God is love. What is the first and greatest commandment? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself. What is the first fruit of the Spirit? The first being in the world is God.

The first and greatest commandment? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. The first fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. I've been to Ireland once when we were living in England.

I went to Ireland, and while I was there, somebody told me an old preacher had some telescopes for sale, and our boys were interested in a telescope. So I went along, and I talked to this old man, and he said, Well, I'll sell you this one. It's a brass barrel telescope with four or five extensions for \$15.

I bought it. I brought it home. We lived on a hill overlooking Manchester.

It had a bay window. It was a four-story house, actually. And I said to the boys, Now you can sit in the window of our bedroom, and you can search all over Manchester.

I thought, I have solved the greatest problem ever. I've got three boys. They're going to be quiet for the next three years looking through a telescope.

And they were quiet for three minutes. Paul came downstairs, and he said, Daddy, this is a good telescope. I said, Thank you.

I wanted to buy a good telescope, but he said, It's a celestial telescope. I said, What do you mean? Well, he said, It's only useful for looking at stars. That means we can stay up every night and look at the stars.

I'd made a problem instead of solving one. They'd never want to go to bed. They want to sit there looking at stars.

I said, But it's a nice telescope. And the little guy's got it like this. He said, It is.

Look, look, look, look. And he pulled out the extensions. And just as he said it, I saw that barrel as being love.

The extension is joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, so forth and so forth. They're all there in the barrel of love. You exercise them in love.

If gifts and tongues are the answer to revival, how is it? And I'm quite kind here. I preach in Pentecostal churches often, and I say it when I'm there. How is it they haven't set America on fire? How is it they have as much carnality as anybody? The strength is not in tongues.

The strength is not in miracles. The strength is not even in faith. The strength is in love.

And when the love of God is shed abroad, you can lay down your life for the person that you love. And so again, the first being in the world is God, and he is love. The first fruit of the Spirit is love.

The first and greatest commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength. And he says this love works out like this. Now skip it quickly.

He says love, you know, it gives all it has to feed the poor. He says love is never puffed up. It's very hard to define love.

Well, one way to find out what love is is to find what it isn't. It is not hatred, obviously. You cannot be a Christian and have a grudge.

If you have a grudge in your heart, an unforgiving spirit, you're not a Christian tonight. You're a backslider. You're a backslider.

Because those things will poison your system. And he says love is never puffed up. Pride is a terrible thing.

It got Satan kicked out of heaven because he had pride. I think of this.

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